

## Message Text

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ACTION DIWY-01

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CU-04 PA-02 INR-07 SIL-01 LAB-04

SS-15 H-02 AID-05 /054 W

----- 055081

R 071751Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0940

USIA WASHDC

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 06961

STATE FOR CATHERINE EAST, IWY SECRETARIAT; CU/WE

USIA FOR ICS; IWE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OEXC

SUBJECT: USIS LONDON CONFERENCE: "SISTERS: A TRANS-

ATLANTIC VIEW OF THE AMERICAN WOMAN TODAY"

BEGIN SUMMARY: USIS CONFERENCE FOR INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR DRAWS INFLUENTIAL AUDIENCE TO DISCUSS LEGISLATION, EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL ROLES. ENTHUSIASTIC RESPONSE (DOCUMENTATION TO FOLLOW) AND REQUESTS FOR CONTINUING CONTACTS MEASURE OF SUCCESS. END SUMMARY

1. "SISTERS: A TRANS-ATLANTIC VIEW OF THE AMERICAN WOMAN TODAY" WAS THE BANNER UNDER WHICH APPROXIMATELY 160 WOMEN AND MEN ACTIVELY INTERESTED IN WOMEN'S RIGHTS OR THE STUDY OF AMERICAN SOCIETY GATHERED FOR A ONE-DAY CONFERENCE AT THE EMBASSY ON FRIDAY, APRIL 25, 1975. CAREFULLY CHOSEN AMERICANS (INCLUDING EMBASSY PERSONNEL) KNOWLEDGEABLE IN THE FIELD WERE ALSO INVITED TO ENCOURAGE THE EXCHANGE OF IDEAS WITH MEMBERS OF BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT, JOURNALISTS AND BROADCASTERS, REPRESENTATIVES OF WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS, PEOPLE WITH POLITICAL, GOVERNMENTAL, SOCIAL AND MEDICAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND AMERICAN STUDIES SPECIALISTS.

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PERHAPS THE TWO EXTREMES ARE BEST EXEMPLIFIED BY A

93-YEAR-OLD DAME OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE WHO IS A LIFELONG SUFFRAGIST AND A YOUNG MOTHER NURSING A TINY BABY, WHO DEMONSTRATED THAT WOMEN'S "PLACE" IS NOT CONFINED TO THE HOME.

2. AFTER A WELCOME BY AMBASSADOR ELLIOT RICHARDSON, WHICH DEMONSTRATED THE CONCERN AND EFFORTS BEING GIVEN TO WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN AMERICA TODAY, THE MORNING WAS DEVOTED TO AN ANALYSIS OF 'WOMEN AND WORK' BY DR. ADELINE LEVINE, CHAIRMAN OF THE SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT OF SUNY BUFFALO, FOLLOWED BY 'FEMALE/FEMININE 1975' IN WHICH DR. MARION BLANK, PROFESSOR OF PSYCHOLOGY AND PSYCHIATRY AT RUTGERS MEDICAL SCHOOL, EXPLORED CHANGING SOCIAL ATTITUDES. THE FORTHRIGHT YET HUMOROUS STYLE OF BOTH SPEAKERS QUICKLY ENGAGED THE SUPPORT AND PARTICIPATION OF THE AUDIENCE AND THE AURA OF GOOD FEELING THEY ESTABLISHED PREVAILED THROUGHOUT THE DAY.

3. EACH SPEECH WAS CHAIRED BY A BRITISH EXPERT (MISS BETTY LOCKWOOD, CHIEF WOMAN OFFICER OF THE LABOUR PARTY, ON EMPLOYMENT; DR. WENDY GREENGROSS, GENERAL PRACTITIONER AND BROADCASTER, ON SOCIAL ATTITUDES) WHO RELATED THE BRITISH TO THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE AND LED LIVELY QUESTION-AND-ANSWER SESSIONS.

4. DURING A BUFFET LUNCH THE AUDIENCE CONTINUED DEBATES PROVOKED BY THE MORNING'S SESSIONS, BOUGHT BOOKS FROM A STALL RUN BY A LOCAL BOOKSHOP WELL-STOCKED WITH AMERICAN AND BRITISH BOOKS, COLLECTED LOCALLY-PRODUCED LITERATURE AND ADMIRERD THE MEMORABILIA AND SUFFRAGIST MARCHING BANNERS, WHICH TOGETHER WITH A CONTEMPORARY PHOTO DISPLAY FROM USIS GAVE A VISUAL PERSPECTIVE TO THE NEW FEMINIST MOVEMENT.

5. THE AFTERNOON WAS DOMINATED BY TWO WOMEN IN THE FRONT LINE OF AMERICAN WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT: MS. ARVONNE FRASER, PRESIDENT OF THE WOMEN'S EQUITY ACTION LEAGUE, AND MS. CATHERINE EAST, DEPUTY COORDINATOR OF THE SECRETARIAT FOR THE OBSERVATION OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR, WHO GALLANTLY ANSWERED OUR PLEA FOR HELP ON FOUR UNCLASSIFIED

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DAYS' NOTICE. EACH SPOKE ON ASPECTS OF LEGISLATION AND GOVERNMENT ACTION AND SHARED THE QUESTION-AND-ANSWER PERIODS, ANSWERING POINTED AND PRACTICAL QUESTIONS ABOUT LEGISLATIVE FORMULAE AND PRACTICAL TECHNIQUES FOR COMBATING DISCRIMINATION WHICH THE BRITISH ARE BEGINNING TO CONTEND WITH. THE AUTHORITY AND EXPERIENCE OF THESE TWO LADIES, VERY DIFFERENT IN APPEARANCE AND STYLE BUT UNITED IN EFFORT, WAS AN EXAMPLE FOR THE WOMEN'S RIGHTS

MOVEMENT IN BRITAIN WHICH SUFFERS FROM FRAGMENTATION  
AND CLASS DIVISIONS. THE EXCELLENT BRITISH CHAIRMAN OF  
THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION WAS MRS. JOYCE BUTLER, M.P. WHO

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FOUR YEAR AGO INTRODUCED IN PARLIAMENT ANTI-  
DISCRIMINATION LEGISLATION WHICH DID NOT PASS; MOOD  
IS NOW CHANGING AND A POWERFUL ANTI-SEX DISCRIMINATION  
BILL INTRODUCED IN MARCH SHOWS PROMISE OF PASSAGE; AN  
EQUAL EMPLOYMENT BILL BECOMES LAW IN THE AUTUMN.

6. ALTHOUGH BECAUSE OF THE NATURE OF BRITISH SOCIETY  
THERE HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN ROOM FOR THE EXTRAORDINARY  
WOMAN TO MAKE HER MARK (VIZ. THE NUMBER OF WOMEN IN HIGH  
POLITICAL OFFICE) AND POLITICAL PRESSURE GROUPS (SUCH AS  
OUR CO-SPONSOR THE NCW AND FAWCETT SOCIETY) HAVE  
CAMPAIGNED FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS, ONLY NOW ARE SIGNS OF  
GRASS-ROOTS MOVEMENT DISCERNIBLE. USIS HOPED WITH THIS  
CONFERENCE TO ENCOURAGE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN NOT ONLY  
BRITON AND AMERICAN BUT ALSO BETWEEN 'ESTABLISHMENT'  
WOMEN'S RIGHTS CAMPAIGNERS AND MEMBERS OF THE MORE  
EXTREME WOMEN'S LIB GROUPS IN BRITAIN. IN FIRST EFFORT  
THE CONFERENCE WAS UNUSUALLY SUCCESSFUL; IN SECOND, THE  
RESULTS WERE MORE DISAPPOINTING AS FEW WOMEN'S

LIBERATIONISTS ATTENDED.

7. WE HOPE THAT USIS LONDON HAS HELPED TO IMPLEMENT THE  
AIMS OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR AND ENLARGE  
UNDERSTANDING OF AMERICAN POLITICAL PROCESSES AND  
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SOCIETY. GIVEN THE WARMTH OF RESPONSE AND DEMAND FOR  
INFORMATION THE POST IS DISTRIBUTING TRANSCRIPTS TO ALL  
IN ATTENDANCE AS WELL AS TO SEVERAL PERIODICALS. THE  
POSSIBILITY OF A FOLLOW-UP CONFERENCE OR LECTURE BY  
OUTSTANDING AMERICAN DURING THE COMING YEAR WILL BE  
EXPLORED. OF NO SMALL IMPORTANCE ARE CONTACTS AND  
COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIPS BEGUN WITH COMMITTED AND  
INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE MANY OF WHOM HAD NO PREVIOUS CONTACT  
WITH EMBASSY BUT WHO NOW FEEL PART OF A SHARED ANGLO-  
AMERICAN VENTURE.

8. FIELD MESSAGE, TRANSCRIPTS AND CONFERENCE MATERIALS TO  
FOLLOW.

9. LONDON EXTREMELY GRATEFUL AID IWE, ICS, CU AND  
SECRETARIAT IWY.  
RICHARDSON

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